

Claustrophobia

Issue #2 • Newsletter of Anarchist Black Cross-D.C. • August 1994



INSIDE: UPDATES ON MUMIA ABU-JAMAL AND LEONARD PELTIER;
DC'S FEMALE INMATES FILE CLASS ACTION SUIT;
FRED HAMPTON, JR.; ABC - DC UPDATE.

INTRODUCTION...

Hello, this is the second edition of the anarchist black cross-d.c. newsletter. We recently got together to do work with prisoners to fight the prison industry. We are part of the re-emerging abc network. There is more to say about what we aim to do and what our beliefs are, but we will leave that until later. We publish this newsletter first of all to let people know that we exist. We also hope to let more people in the D.C. area know some of the madness that is going on in prisons. We plan on trying to publish a new edition every two months. If you know of something that we should print here, let us know. Prisoners are encouraged to write and to contribute. We hope to have regular coverage of issues specifically relating to women and prison / imprisonment, so if you have any information / ideas for that, please contact us. Claustrophobia is free to prisoners. All others please send \$1 postpaid to receive a copy through the mail. Please distribute the information in here as widely as possible. Articles are not copyrighted unless specifically marked as such. Please send us any and all information on prisons, political prisoners, and prisoner support work. We will reprint whatever we can, and distribute as much information as possible in the D.C. area. The name 'Claustrophobia' is taken from a poem by political prisoner Laura Whitehorn, written when she was in D.C. jail. You can find it in Hauling Up the Morning, an excellent collection of writings by political prisoners / P.O.W.'s edited by Tim Blunk and Ray Levasseur, on Red Sea Press.

abc-dc
po box 77432
washington dc 20013

Mumia Abu-Jamal's Commentaries Cancelled by NPR

In April of this year, National Public Radio (NPR) contracted with Mumia Abu-Jamal to be a regular monthly commentator for the network's news-magazine, "All Things Considered." He was to be a commentator on criminal justice issues, reporting from where he sits—on Death Row in Pennsylvania. Several tapes were recorded, and NPR conducted intensive promotion for the commentaries, which were to begin on May 16.

Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther activist and supporter of the MOVE Organization, is a well-known Black journalist. He had won an award from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting in 1981 for his reporting on WUHY (an NPR-affiliate) before being arrested for being framed for the murder of a police officer.

Of course, the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) flipped out when they heard that NPR was planning on featuring Jamal, and launched an intense campaign denouncing NPR for giving airtime to a "cop killer". Police officials went on local commercial radio to urge a boycott of NPR. Within 48 hours, the network capitulated to the FOP and decided not to air Jamal's commentaries, which they had already promoted for a month. NPR managing editor Bruce Drake cited "misgivings about the appropriateness of using ... a convicted murderer seeking a new trial, especially since we had not ... provided context or contrasting points of view."

When NPR caved in to the cops, Pacifica radio (a smaller but more grassroots and

progressive network of stations) decided to give Abu-Jamal time on its national news program. This is good, but we need to keep the pressure on NPR to air Jamal's commentaries to its larger listening audience of over two million people.

Abu-Jamal was, before his arrest, the head of the Philadelphia chapter of the Association of Black Journalists, and has been nicknamed "the voice of the voiceless" for his courageous reporting. He was one of the few Philadelphia journalists to expose the police brutality against the MOVE Organization. His trial was filled with blatant violations of his rights. Even Amnesty International expressed "grave concern" about the inflammatory introduction into his sentencing hearing of statements he had made when he was a 16-year old Black Panther leader. Abu-Jamal has been on death row since 1982. He could be executed at any moment that the governor of Pennsylvania signs his death warrant.

If you want to get his voice on the air, please act now. Write to Bill Buzenberg, Vice President of NPR News, 635 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20001, or call (800) 235-1212. Buzenberg apparently supports carrying the Abu-Jamal commentaries, and enough letters and calls from listeners could push him to put Mumia on the air. If your local station would like to carry the commentaries, call the Prison Radio Project at (415) 648-4505. For more info on Mumia's defense campaign, contact Concerned Friends and Family of Mumia Abu Jamal, PO Box 19709, Philadelphia, PA 19143.

NPR bows and licks the boots
of THE MAN!



DC Women Prisoners File Class Action Suit

Fighting Institutionalized Deprivation and Discrimination

A group of ten women prisoners in the District of Columbia Correctional System have filed a class action suit on behalf of all women prisoners in the DC prison system. Their suit is against the DC Department of Corrections and a number of individual directors and administrators in the DC prison system. They have brought suit based on the institutionalized harrassment, discrimination and deprivation of basic needs that women in the DC prison system experience. The women are being legally represented by the National Womens Law Center. For a copy of their very thorough case against the Department of Corrections, you can call the National Womens Law Center at (202) 328-5160, or write to them at 1616 P St NW, Washington DC 20036, and they will send you one. Or if you send us a couple of stamps, we'll send you a copy. It is 42 pages long, so we obviously can't print it here. But so you can get an idea of what it's about, here's some of the topics covered in the complaint:

Women Prisoners in the DC Correctional System; Conditions of Confinement;

Deprivation of Obstetrical and Gynecological Care; Deprivation of Basic Sanitation Needs; Deprivation of Basic Shelter Needs; Fire Hazards; Deprivation of Basic Nutritional Needs; Defendants' Knowledge of and Deliberate Indifference to These Continuing Violations; Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harrasment, and Invasion of Personal Privacy; Inferior Treatment: Educational Programs; Work Opportunities for Women Prisoners; Religious Programs and Privileges; Recreational Programs and Privileges; Quality of Life: Dining Privileges, Canteen, Clothing, Smoking, Harm to the Plaintiffs.

As said above, the complaint is very thorough, with general statistical information about women in the DC prison system, as well as specific examples of harrassment and discrimination. Anyone interested in the plight of women in the DC prison system should get a copy of the case.

Here is an article from the Washington Post about the case. For more up to date information, contact the National Womens Law Center at the address or number listed above.

THE WASHINGTON POST

June 13, 1994

Women Tell Of Sex Abuse At D.C. Jails *Trial Begins in Suit Brought by Inmates*

By Brooke A. Masters
Washington Post Staff Writer

Choking back sobs, a 21-year-old former D.C. jail inmate testified yesterday that one of her jailers, instead of locking her up for the night, ordered her into a bathroom and forced her to have sex with him.

She was one of three inmates or former inmates who told their stories of sexual harrassment and assault to a U.S. District Court judge in Washington as the trial started in a class-action suit filed against the Corrections Department. The suit was brought in the name of 10 anonymous female inmates and former inmates who allege that they

were regularly subjected to abuse and mistreated because they are women.

"The Department of Corrections places women at the bottom of the priority scale in terms of programs, housing, medical care and a safe environment," Peter Nickles, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, said in his opening statement.

He said the plaintiffs will show that female inmates are denied appropriate medical care, given less access to educational and religious programs than male inmates and kept in unsanitary, unsafe facilities at two buildings in the Lorton Correctional Complex.

The suit is just one of many problems faced by the troubled D.C. Department of Corrections. The agency, which has a \$225 million budget, also has been dogged by allegations of rampant drug use and numerous escapes from halfway houses.

Deputy D.C. Corporation Counsel Maria Amato defended the handling of female prisoners in her opening statement yesterday.

"The Department of Corrections does everything an institution can do to prevent sexual misconduct," she said. As for complaints about parity, "not only do the female [prisoners] receive what the males receive, they receive more."

"The evidence will show that the District is not only compassionate

and knowledgeable about the special needs [of female prisoners], it services those needs," Amato said, citing a 32-bed pregnancy unit. She called the plaintiffs' allegations "innuendo and hearsay" and at the same time contended the acts do not violate the prisoners' constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment.

The lawsuit asks Judge June L. Green to impose 53 pages of requirements on the Corrections Department, including appointing an outside monitor to supervise the handling of sexual complaints, hiring more staff members, adding programs and cleaning up the facilities.

Nickles said female prisoners make up the fastest-growing segment of the inmate population in the District and the nation. From 1984 to 1992, the number of female prisoners rose 147 percent, to 861 inmates.

The inmates in the trial, which lawyers expect to last three weeks, are testifying anonymously for fear of retaliation, said another plaintiffs' attorney, Brenda Smith, senior counsel of the National Women's Law Center.

The 21-year-old testified that she was in jail for a kidnapping conviction and in the infirmary because she was vomiting, when a lieutenant tried to make her perform oral sex and then ordered her into the bathroom and forced her to have sexual intercourse.

When she complained, jail officials "acted like they didn't want to talk to me," the 21-year-old said. She said she was not taken to D.C. General Hospital for medical care and testing until almost 24 hours after the assault.

The witness said she filed a complaint with the D.C. police but never heard from them again. She said the complaint quickly became the talk of the jail. "It was like a game to everybody there. They didn't care about anybody's feelings."

A current inmate in the Correctional Treatment Facility, a women's prison at Lorton, testified that a corrections sergeant touched her breasts and vagina and asked her to kiss him.

She said she complained to several authorities, but he continued to be assigned occasionally to her part of the prison.

The inmate, who is in prison for assault with a deadly weapon, also testified that when she went into labor during her pregnancy she was taken to D.C. General in handcuffs. After her baby was born, she said

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...)

both her legs and one of her arms were chained to her hospital bed.

A third inmate, who is in prison for armed robbery and assault, said she felt coerced to have sex with a guard in exchange for rides to her aunt's house during four monthly furloughs.

She said she did not report the incidents because "I felt he was an officer and it wouldn't do any good."

Amato said "the evidence will show that [the prison system] does have a complaint system that does maintain confidentiality. . . .

"Officers are disciplined."



D.C.'s Female Inmates Get Poor Care, Expert Testifies

By Brooke A. Masters
Washington Post Staff Writer

The District provides "deficient" and "inadequate" obstetric and gynecological care to female prisoners, a California expert on prison health care testified yesterday, as women continued to present their case in a class-action suit against the D.C. Department of Corrections.

Benjamin Major's assessment followed two days of testimony by inmates, including a woman who said she gave birth in her cell last July before medical personnel arrived and another who said she waited 18 months for a biopsy after complaining of a painful, leaky breast.

The suit, filed in the name of 10 inmates and former inmates, says female prisoners' civil and constitutional rights are being violated by conditions in the D.C. jail, the Correctional Treatment Facility and the Lorton Correctional Complex. The plaintiffs allege that women are sexually harassed and assaulted, denied appropriate medical care, kept in unsanitary conditions and allowed to participate in fewer educational and recreational programs than men.

D.C. corporation counsel lawyers said the department provides as much or more medical care and programming for female inmates as it does for men and vigorously investigates complaints of sexual misconduct by corrections officers.

The suit asks U.S. District Judge June L. Green to impose 53 pages worth of requirements on the department. The plaintiffs say that would remedy problems of discrimination and reduce sexual misconduct.

Since testimony began Monday, five inmates and former inmates and two experts have testified about conditions in the D.C. penal system. All of the inmates are testifying anonymously because they fear reprisals.

Major, a obstetrician and gynecologist who is in charge

of prenatal care for women in the Sacramento County jails, testified that Pap smears—which test for abnormal cervical cells—were not done in nine of the 70 D.C. cases he reviewed, although department policy requires such tests within a month after an inmate is admitted.

Major said some pregnant inmates were not given proper food, vitamins and classes, and he faulted the lack of counseling for the deaths of two inmates' babies shortly after birth. Major said he also found that the prison staff recorded women's symptoms on charts with drawings of men with the genitals crossed out.

Assistant Corporation Counsel Maria Amato said some of the testing, counseling and education takes place at D.C. General Hospital and the D.C. jail, which Major did not visit. She also listed more than a dozen medical staff members who have responsibility for prisoners' health.

Earlier, an inmate testified that she gave birth in her cell at the Correctional Treatment Facility after being in labor for more than 12 hours.

The inmate, who is serving two to six years for cocaine possession, said corrections officials sent her—in handcuffs and leg irons—to D.C. General Hospital when she first went into labor on the night of July 14, but a hospital doctor said she was not yet ready and sent her back to prison.

The next morning, she was taken to a court appearance, but the labor pains were so intense she could not walk, she said. Court officials sent her back to the prison facility, where she asked for medical care. By the time a prison physician's assistant arrived, the baby had been born.

"[I was] mad. I know I could have stayed at D.C. General," she said. "They should have kept me there." Amato said the baby was born only a half-hour after the inmate returned from court.

The inmate with breast problems said she missed two appointments with a specialist because she and her jail-

ers were late leaving Lorton. She said she waited four more months for a breast biopsy because the medical staff made four scheduling mistakes. The inmate, who is serving 14 years to life for second-degree murder and two other charges, also said she is HIV-positive and has lost 70 pounds since 1992. When Amato asked why she did not ask for care during prison officials' daily medical rounds, the inmate replied that she was afraid other inmates would see her records because they are kept in an open cart during the rounds.

Anarchist Black Cross Conference

August 12 to 14, 1994
New York City

Agenda will include discussions as to how to build the ABC, politics of imprisonment in the U.S., developing an Anti-Control Unit Network

For more information about the conference, write:

Nightcrawlers ABC
Box 1034
Bronx, NY 10454

Contributions to the conference and subscriptions to the pre-conference Bulletin, (try to send \$10). Write:

NJ ABC
Box 8532
Haledon, NJ 07508-8532

ANYONE FROM THE DC AREA INTERESTED IN ATTENDING, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

from
THE WASHINGTON
POST, June 16,
1994.

Leonard Peltier Clemency Bid in Critical Period

A petition for presidential clemency for Leonard Peltier, an American Indian Movement leader wrongfully imprisoned for over 18 years, is currently under consideration by the Department of Justice. A pardon attorney gave it a favorable recommendation, but this is only the first of several barriers before Peltier's freedom is secure. The present situation's significance can only be understood in the context of the events that led to it.

In 1975, traditional leaders on Pine Ridge reservation, South Dakota, invited AIM members to a private ranch. The leaders sought protection from tribal chairman Dick Wilson's private army, the "Guardians of the Oglala Nation" (GOONs). This force was paid, armed, and equipped with misappropriated government funds, and trained by the FBI. These "peacekeepers" committed over 200 assaults and murders in their 1972-1976 "reign of terror."

On June 26th, FBI agents Ronald Williams and Jack Coler followed a red pick-up truck onto the ranch, pursuing a youth accused of stealing used cowboy boots. A shoot-out broke out between the FBI agents and the pick-up's passengers. AIM members heard the gunshots and returned fire, thinking GOONs were attacking. Within 40 minutes, police reinforcements, FBI agents, and white vigilantes were covering the area. In the firefight's aftermath, agents Coler and Williams and AIM member Joe Stuntz were dead.

Peltier and three others were charged in the agents' deaths. Two defendants were acquitted, their jury ruling self-defense. The charges against another were dropped, to focus the "full prosecutive weight of the federal government" on Peltier, according to an FBI memorandum. FBI documents later revealed Peltier was targeted by COINTELPRO, a program that "neutralized" people by slander, attack, and arrest. Peltier fled to Canada, where he was arrested and extradited with affidavits the government now acknowledges were false.

The original judge was replaced with Judge Benson, an investor in Indian lands known to dislike Natives. The FBI fabricated a case based primarily on two elements. One was a shell casing from the trunk of Coler's car. The FBI testified the

casing was from Peltier's gun, but later released a 1976 teletype showing this was false. The other element was the red pick-up truck, which was changed to a red and white van to match Peltier's vehicle. Based on this and the prosecutor's assertion that Peltier "executed these two men at point-blank range," Peltier received two life sentences.

Four years later the teletype was released under the Freedom of Information Act. The 1981 appeal that followed was denied by Judge Benson. The Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed Benson's decision, leading to another hearing in 1984. The FBI acknowledged perjury in Peltier's trial, and the prosecution could not rectify discrepancies between actual evidence and statements it had made. Despite this, Judge Benson ruled the conviction would stand.

In Peltier's 1985 appeal and his final appeal in 1992, prosecutor Lynn Crooks admitted "We don't know who shot those agents," and that the case against Peltier no longer existed. In the 1992 appeal, Crooks told the judge Peltier had been convicted as a "guilty participant," despite stating at the original trial that Peltier had executed the two agents. The court recognized "a clear abuse of the investigative process," but Peltier's two life sentences remain. The Supreme Court refused to review the case in 1987.

Peltier's 1993 parole hearing proved fruitless. After four hours of testimony, the parole board took five minutes to deny Peltier's parole for the next 15 years. This decision is currently being appealed.

After 18 years of dead ends, there is finally hope with the petition for executive clemency. The Deputy Attorney General's Office is currently reviewing the petition. A telephone, fax, and letter campaign is being promoted to assure a positive outcome.

What you can do: To join the millions of individuals and groups that support Leonard Peltier (including over fifty members of the U.S. Congress, Amnesty International, the National Association of Christians and Jews, over fifty members of the Canadian Parliament, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and the Archbishop of Canterbury), you can

* Write the president
at The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20500; phone (202) 456-1111; or fax (202) 456-2461;

FREE PELTIER



* Write the Honorable Jamie S. Gorelick

Deputy Attorney General, 10th Street & Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C., 20539; phone (202) 514-2101, or fax (202) 514-4699.

* Write the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee

P.O. Box 583, Lawrence, Kansas, 66044; or phone (913) 842-5774

For further information:

* For a detailed case history, see Peter Matthiessen's book In the Spirit of Crazy Horse; read "A Warrior Caged" in The State of Native America, M. Annette Jaimes, Ed.; or rent Incident at Oglala, produced and narrated by Robert Redford, at a local video store.

THIS ARTICLE WAS EXCERPTED FROM A FLYER PUT OUT BY THE NPDUM / FRED HAMPTON, JR. DEFENSE COMMITTEE. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THEM AT 5409 S. HALSTED, CHICAGO, IL 60609.....

Free Fred Hampton Jr. !

24 Year Old African Political Prisoner in the U.S.

Young Fred Framed-Up!

On May 19, 1993, 24 year old Fred Hampton Jr., son of slain Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, was framed up and sentenced to 18 years in prison. The bogus charge against him was "aggravated arson," but Fred Jr.'s real crime in the eyes of the U.S. white power system was organizing other young African men and women to freedom and independence.

The Chicago police, the FBI and the local police-paid "informants," along with parasitic Korean merchants conspired to frame Fred for the dubious firebombing of Korean owned Lee's Mens Fashions on South Halstead Street in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating verdict in 1992. There was no proof this "firebombing" ever happened and not a shred of evidence of Fred Jr.'s involvement. During the trial the State prosecution presented only evidence of Fred Jr.'s political beliefs—showing it was clearly a political attack against him and the African community he serves.

Free Fred Hampton Jr. !
The National People's Democratic

Uhuru Movement was formed by the African People's Socialist Party in 1991 to organize African workers and their allies to stop the U.S. war against African people and to defend their national democratic rights. NPDUM calls on all African people, supporters and allies to organize to free courageous young Fred Hampton Jr.

Write to Fred!

Fred Hampton Jr. / aka Alfred Johnson
B42954

P.O. Box 1700, Hill Correctional Center
Galesburg, Illinois 61401

What You Can Do to Free Fred Hampton Jr.

Call, Write and FAX to the following officials:

1) Governor Jim Edgar
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706
(217) 782-3560

2) Director of Dept. of Corrections-
Howard Peters
1301 Concordia Ct
Springfield, IL 62702
Fax (217) 522-2666
(217) 522-2666 ext. 7016

List of Demands:

1. That the harassment of Fred Hampton Jr. and supporters of the Uhuru Movement be stopped immediately!
2. The Frame-up of Fred Hampton Jr. be stopped and he be set free!
3. Reparations for Fred Hampton Jr. and Akua Njeri.

abc-dc update

We here at Anarchist Black Cross - DC are a small, loosely organized collective which came together within the past year. We are going through the process of deciding whether or not to work as a closed collective, where to focus our energies primarily, as well as many other questions. As of now, our group includes some five to ten members with varying levels of commitment and involvement.

As a functioning organization, we are in contact currently with a handful of anarchist or anti-authoritarian/ revolutionary prisoners, whom we provide with various minor services, such as acquiring literature, sending stamps, or helping with legal appeals. We are also working on educating ourselves in regards to prison issues, particularly in the D.C. area.

Several of us have done support work for Mumia abu Jamal. Two of us went to the July 2 "We Care!" march & rally in Philadelphia in support of freeing Mumia, and we have produced a poster to put up locally with very general information about his case.

We have also endorsed and worked on the campaign to support local musician and activist David Sawyer, who is up for trial in North Carolina on August 2nd. Members of abc-dc have helped organize and participate in a "Festival for Justice" for David Sawyer here in DC, and we will continue to work with the David Sawyer Support Committee.

Claustrophobia is our newsletter. The past two issues have been primarily reprints of information available elsewhere on general or well-known cases. However, as we grow more organized and educated about local issues, the newsletter will begin to take on those characteristics. The aim of *Claustrophobia* is to share the results of our research with others, outside and inside the walls.

Claustrophobia
c/o abc-dc
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